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IRAN Two female Christian converts freed from Iran's Evin Prison

Pressure on religious leaders in Cuba has increased significantly over the past year according to a new report by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW). Comprehensive evidence within the document details a sharp rise in religious liberty violations there. Independent church leaders from the fast growing Apostolic Movement have been particularly targeted for harassment, detentions and court summons by the Government.

Two female Christians originally from Islamic families have been released from Tehran's Evin prison today without bail, after being detained for nearly nine months, refusing to recant their faith.

Despite their release, Maryam Rostampour, 27, and Marzieh Amirizadeh, 30, may still have to attend a civil court hearing. The women are also reported to be in very poor health, having spent 259 days in detention without access to appropriate medical care.

The two women were arrested by Iranian security officers on 5 March, 2009 after their apartment was searched and their Bibles confiscated, amongst other items. Neither woman has committed a crime defined under Iranian or international law. At a hearing at Tehran's Revolutionary Court on Sunday, 9 August, both women refused to recant their faith after being ordered to do so. They were subsequently returned to their overcrowded cells, where their health rapidly deteriorated.

A charge against them for 'anti-state activity' was dropped at the Revolutionary court on 7 October.

In Iran, apostates (Muslims who convert to another religion) often face arbitrary arrest, indefinite detention and a host of other human rights abuses.

CSW's Advocacy Director, Tina Lambert said: "Both Maryam and Marzieh have suffered tremendous injustice and today's news is warmly welcomed by CSW. However, we remain deeply concerned that these women may still have to attend court hearings. We call upon the international community to seek assurances from the Iranian government that both women will not face further detention or legal proceedings. Our concerns are heightened by scores of other unlawful detentions and gross human rights abuses taking place in Iran over the last year. Maryam and Marzieh were held solely on the basis of exercising their most basic right, freedom of thought, conscience and belief."

Notes to Editors:

- For CSW's press releases, please click [here](#) or download a copy of CSW's report on apostasy.
- CSW submitted a briefing on Iran as part of the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review (UPR). A copy of the report is downloadable and a photograph of the women, by contacting CSW's Press Office.

Read more about Iran...

